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INFO RHMFISS/18WG CP KADENA AB JA
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RUSFNSG/CDR10THASG TORII STATION JA
RHMFISS/CG FIRST MAW
RUHBABA/CG III MEF CAMP COURTNEY JA
RUHBBEA/CG THIRD FSSG CAMP KINSER JA
RUHBABA/CG THIRD MARDIV
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/COMFLEACT OKINAWA JA
RHMFISS/COMMARCORBASESJAPAN CAMP BUTLER JA
RHMFISS/COMMARFORPAC
RHHMHAA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI
RHOVVKG/COMSEVENTHFLT
RUHBVMA/CTF 76
RUYLBAH/DODSPECREP OKINAWA JA
RUESOK/FBIS OKINAWA JA
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 0262
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 0853
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/NAVCRIMINVSERVRA OKINAWA JA
RUHBANB/OKINAWA AREA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CAMP BUTLER JA
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 0337
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 0297
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI PRIORITY 0040
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0794
RHMFISS/USARPAC COMMAND CENTER FT SHAFTER HI
RUALBCC/YOKOTA AB HQ USFJ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAHA 000090

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SUBJECT: OKINAWAN GOVERNOR SUFFERS STROKE, 2 WEEKS CONVELESCENCE
PREDICTED

REF: NAHA 00000089

CLASSIFIED BY: Kevin K. Maher, Consul General, U.S. Consulate
General, Naha, Japan, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (U) On June 25 Okinawa Prefectural Government (OPG) officials and the local media reported that Governor Hirokazu NAKAIMA suffered a mild stroke, and would convalesce for two weeks before returning to public responsibilities. According to the press, the stroke might have occurred as early as June 22, and contrary to medical advice, Nakaima decided to lead the June 23 prefectural ceremony commemorating the Battle of Okinawa. During the hour-long ceremony, attended by Prime Minister Shinzo ABE, other national and local leaders, and thousands of residents of Okinawa, Nakaima read prepared remarks, and stood and bowed repeatedly as participants bowed to him on their way to an altar to lay flowers. No illness or discomfort was visible to casual observers. Early on June 25, Vice Governor Zenki NAKAZATO officially announced that Nakaima had been hospitalized for a mild stroke. He predicted the governor would spend a week at the hospital, then a week at home. Nakazato said Nakaima's speech and thoughts were clear, and specified that Nakazato would attend events as the governor's representative, not as acting governor.

12. (SBU) This distinction is meaningful, because if the governor were incapacitated it could trigger a gubernatorial election. An OPG official told ConGen Naha that upon the death or resignation of the governor, the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly (OPA) had five days to notify the OPG election office. In case

of an incapacitating illness or injury, the official noted, it was expected that a close associate would advise the governor to resign. The OPA would accept such a resignation as a matter of course. Once the OPG election office received notice from the OPA, it must prepare for and conduct a gubernatorial election within 50 days.

13. (SBU) On June 27 the OPG announced that it would post information about the governor's condition daily, due to the overwhelming volume of inquiries from the press and associates from all walks of life. Speculation has been rife that Nakaima's health is in worse shape than the OPG has admitted. Nakaima smokes heavily and is reputedly a heavy drinker, and even a mild stroke can be a serious matter. The most active proponent of the theory to ConGen Naha has been independent national Diet member Mikio SHIMOJI, who repeatedly and widely "confided" that he wanted to run in the November 2006 gubernatorial race. However, we have no reason to believe at this point that Nakaima's condition is any worse than what the OPG is telling us.

14. (C) Neither the ruling coalition nor the opposition parties are in any shape to field a candidate for governor in the near future. The "reformist" (anti-military) parties are still licking self-inflicted wounds from infighting over their candidate and platform for the November 2006 gubernatorial race. Nakaima's aggressiveness in seeking Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)/Komeito backing for his candidacy ruffled feathers amongst conservatives who might have wanted a chance, but the other possible candidates were frankly not very strong. Okinawa LDP executive director Hiroshi NAKAMATSU told us Nakaima was the most capable candidate for prefectural governor since former governor Junji Nishime (the late father of two current national Diet members). We know, however, that Okinawa LDP's first choice for candidate was younger brother Kozaburo Nishime, who made it clear that he preferred the Tokyo-based life of a national Diet member to the Naha-bound life of the prefectural

NAHA 00000090 002 OF 002

governor.

15. (C) Since taking office, Nakaima has proved far more supportive of US Forces and facilities in Okinawa than his putatively conservative predecessor. During a January 2007 courtesy call by the senior US military official in Okinawa, Nakaima waived off a laundry list of complaints prepared by his staff and engaged LtGen Joseph Weber on gaining access to on-base markets and schools for Okinawans. Nakaima asked the senior USG military and civilian representatives in Okinawa to participate in the June 23 commemoration ceremony, a remarkable first, especially considering that Japanese military officials are still not in the first rank of guests.

16. (C) Nakaima's support is not undiluted. He continues to seek difficult (if not impossible) changes to the bilaterally-agreed replacement facility for Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. Recently he issued a statement calling on the United States to refrain from sending Navy mine countermeasures ships to a civilian port on the south-western island of Yonaguni, reftel. His objections are not as shrill as those of his predecessors, though, and often appear to be pro forma nods to perceived sensitivity, intended to mitigate hounding by the media. Consul General Maher had a letter delivered to Nakaima's hospital room expressing hope for the Governor's speedy recovery. We were told by his private secretary that he had read the letter and expressed his appreciation for our concern.

MAHER